

Cell Phone and Smart Device Use in Schools:

A Call for Consistent Statewide Implementation

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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Superintendent Reykdal Publishes Guidance for Schools to Limit Cell Phones During Instructional Time

August 28, 2024

OLYMPIA—August 28, 2024—To support student learning and mental health, schools across the state and nation are updating their policies to restrict cell phone use during the school day.

According to a 2022 study by the Pew Research Center, 95% of teenagers have a smartphone, compared to 73% in 2014–15. Educators nationwide have called for support in limiting student access to cell phones during instructional time to reduce distractions and provide the optimal environment for student learning.

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EDUCATION

Washington schools superintendent publishes guidance for schools to limit cellphone use

A 2024 survey found that 79% of educators who teach in schools that allow cellphones find it to be "very disruptive."

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OSPI issues guidance on cellphone use in WA classrooms

Aug. 29, 2024 at 6:06 am | Updated Aug. 29, 2024 at 6:06 am

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In 2022, 95% of U.S. teenagers had smartphones, up from 73% in 2014-15.



79% of educators in schools allowing cell phones find them disruptive.

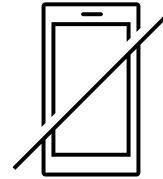
90% of educators surveyed said they would support restrictions on cell phone use during instructional time.



As more districts work with their communities to adopt policies, we've been able to learn more about the **process**, the **challenges**, and the **positive changes** we see when students are able to show up and be present in their learning.



Of the 82% of school districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education compact schools who responded, **31%** reported that they do not have a policy in place.



About **44%** reported that each school within the district may adopt their own policy.



Of the 82% of school districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education compact schools who responded:



57% of school districts with policies to limit mobile device use reported a decrease in disruptions during instructional time



50% reported an increase in student engagement.



40% of districts with a policy reported an increase in interactions between students.



“What we hear from students, families, and educators is that this kind of policy is most effective when it is implemented consistently.”

“From all schools within the district to all classes within the school, there are fewer hurdles when the expectations for students are clear and uniform.”

-State Superintendent Chris Reykdal



Statewide Away for the Day Policy

- Would require every school district to adopt a written policy requiring student mobile devices be “away for the day”
- This includes passing periods, lunch, and other school-day programming.
- Would allow teacher-directed instructional use of mobile devices only when expressly authorized by a certificated staff member as part of a planned learning activity.
- Would protect necessary uses with documented exemptions:
 - Emergency situations.
 - Use required by a student’s IEP or Section 504 plan.
 - Health monitoring and other documented medical necessities.



Contact Us!

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